The Mada Veedhis of Mylapore

(Covering the period 1930-1960)

Reminiscences of a Mylaporean

Price Rs 40

Written by
V. Kedar Rao
No.30, East Mada Street, Mylapore
Chennai - 600004
Ph - 24933610 (R), 9840320501 (M)
Email - vkrao1933@yahoo.co.in

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An Introductory Note for readers of this booklet

This is a rambling description of the Mada Streets area of Mylapore in the early three decades i.e. 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. Information about the places of interest and the persons who peopled them has been brought out in this booklet. It is purely based on my reminiscences and recollections of life as it was lived in those days. Positive features about men and matters only have been brought out. Negative perceptions do not find a place. Only facts which are accurate find a place. Despite my best efforts, if some inaccuracies have crept in (it is highly unlikely that any major ones can be detected), I would request the readers to bear with it. Similarly readers who think that some items need to be added/deleted, I would request that they may give consideration for the writer's freedom and let the contents be as they are and enjoy reading the booklet.

V. Kedar Rao
Retd. Dy. Secy
Govt. of India,
Ministry of Railways

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The Author's Association with Mylapore

I was born in September 1933 at Door No.30, East Mada Street, Mylapore. Our family has stayed in the house in which I was born since the year 1929 when it was bought by my father and continue to live in the same place till date - this period adds up to 85 years. Our family gave the name 'SHIVNER' to the newly purchased house – 'Shivner' was the fort in which Chatrapati Shivaji was born.

The front half had one + one Floors. The roof over the upstairs portion was covered with teak paneling on which Mangalore tiles were spread. The rear half of the house was completely tiled. There was a side passage which opened on Pitchu Pillai Street. Till 1937, we had dry latrines in the side passage and manual scavenging was done. Of course, slight renovations were made to the building of the house periodically. In 1997, the old building was demolished and a new three storied building has come in its place. My wife and I are now living here with my brothers and their families.

Most of the houses in those days did not have electricity connections. The illumination was provided by kerosene lamps. It was a job for the ladies every day to wipe and clean the lamps. Flush outs and closed sewage drains came to the locality much later.

We are Thanjavur Marathi speaking people and my father Sri. E. Vinayaka Rao came to Madras to pursue the B.A. and B.L. degree courses. While studying in College (Pachaiyappas and Law College), he stayed in Victoria hostel in Triplicane. After graduation, he was Lecturer in Mathematics in Pachaiyappas College for two or three years. On getting the B.L. degree, he took up the profession of Advocate of the Madras High Court. He brought his family from Thanjavur after getting his lecturer's post and initially they lived in Purasawalkam. The family's first residence in Mylapore was in

Arundale Street off Kutchery Road. In the year 1920, he took up a house on rent on North Mada Street where his neighbour was Mr. Arunachalam Iyer, Advocate who was the maternal grandfather of Cho Ramaswamy. Cho Ramaswamy himself was my class mate in P.S.High School, Mylapore.

I studied in the Montessori and primary classes I to III in National Girls High School as it was then known. The School was just straight across the street from our house. The teachers in the Montessori were two Australians by name Veale sisters. The school was a red-painted brick building with an arch over the gate on which the school's name was written. The gate was opening on East Mada Street. Much later, perhaps in 1943 or 1944, the school was given the present name Lady Sivaswamy Aiyar Girl's Senior Secondary School. Sir Sivaswami Aiyar had left his entire estate for the school. The management still vests in the National Educational Society, Mylapore, I shifted to P.S. High School from Class IV onwards up to the passing of the School Leaving Certification Examination. My college education - two years intermediate and three years M.A. course, was also in Mylapore at the Vivekananda College. I got employment in the Ministry of Railways (Railway Board) in the year 1957. It is true that I was in Delhi during the period of my service but I could make 4 or 5 visits every year to Madras on leave or duty on the Railway Passes to which I was entitled. The continuity of my being a Mylapore resident was, therefore, always there. Finally, I came back to Mylapore for good in 1997. At this juncture I cannot resist quoting the great American poet Henry Long fellow

"Stay, Stay at home, My heart and rest;
Home-keeping hearts are happiest".

Here is an interesting piece of information about our house 'Shivner'. 'Shivner' had for a long time DC electric current supply and

the fans were DC fans. Gradually, the Madras Tramways and Electric Supply Co.of England who were the suppliers of electricity for entire Madras started changing DC supply to AC supply. Because of contractual obligation they could not compel people to change from DC to AC. At one stage, only a handful of houses including ours remained to be changed. The English manager personally requested us to accede to the change. He even agreed to give AC fans at their cost in lieu of the DC Fans. Finally, AC came to our house in the year 1943.

CHAPTER I

MYLAPORE – The Abode of the Goddess in Peacock Form

The Mada Street area comprises the East, South, West (also known as Ramakrishna Mutt Road) and North Mada Streets. The criss-crossing streets are Pitchupillai Street, Ponnambala Vadyar Street, Kapaleeswarar West Tank Street and Kumara Gurunatha Street. Not to mention the Kapaleeswarar Sannadhi Street. How many times have I walked on these streets all these years. If treading the same street freely and for so long can mean ownership, I can even call myself, in a lighter vein, the owner of this area.

There were very few owners of cars residing on the Mada Streets in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. Those who had cars invariably had garages in their houses. We could only rarely see Motor Cycles which were mainly British Army disposals (scooters were not known). Hand pulled rickshaws and bicycles were the modes of transport apart from buses and trams. There were some horse drawn carriages known as Jutkas. One of the Jutkamen was Lamba and he hailed from Haryana. The Jutkas were stabled in what is known as Mangollai at the confluence of East and North Mada Streets. Mangollai is nowadays the venue for public meetings of political parties.

During the 1930 to 1950 period, there were hardly a dozen shops or commercial establishments in the four Mada Streets put together. There were only rows of big sized independent houses with only one upper storey. A large number of the occupants were Advocates of the High Court. These lawyers were well-known personalities. Some of the Advocates were Telugu speaking persons.

The P.S.High School opened its high school classes in 1905. Initially, it functioned in a building at the junction of North Mada Street and R.K.Mutt Road at the site where the present Indian Bank branch is located. The school moved to its present premises opposite to the Universal temple of Ramakrishna Mutt in the year 1928. Just before the Indian Bank turning and opposite to Thirumylai MRTS station lies Pelathope street. Some giants of the Bar like V.Krishnaswami Aiyar, P.R.Sundara Aiyar, Sir P.S.Sivaswamy Aiyar lived here before moving to more spacious houses elsewhere. One of the residents of Pelathope Shri M.Subbarya Iyer had a large practice in Income tax cases and will be remembered for his role in establishment of Madras Institute of Technology, Vivekananda College and Vidya Mandir School. Two retired Chief Justices of High Courts A.V.Viswanatha Sastry and his son retd. Chief Justice Ratnam are residents of Pelathope.

MYLAPORE – Abode of the Legal Eagles & Healers

The tenants of most of the line of houses on North Mada Street opposite to the Mylapore Tank were Judges, well-known Lawyers or public men of repute. Diwan Bahadur K.S.Ramaswami Sastrigal,District Judge, S.Ramachandra Aiyar ex.Chief Justice of Madras High Court, K.V.Krishnaswami Aiyyar the moving spirit behind the Music Academy and the Library Association were some of those who lived here. Chef Par Excellance, Meenakshi Ammal the writer of the world famous best seller cook book "Samaithu Paar" was K.V.K's cousin. Shri T.L. Venkatarama Iyer, ex.Justice of Supreme Court lived on Sannadhi Street. He was earlier an Advocate of the High Court. He was also a noted Sanskrit scholar and musicologist. He was a President of the Music Academy and was awarded the title of the Sangita Kalanidhi by the Music Academy.

The East Mada Street can boast of eminent lawyers having resided on it. In fact, before being purchased by my father, the tenant of our house 'Shivner' for a short period was M.Patanjali Sastri, Advocate who later became Chief Justice of India. At the place where Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan is housed today was the palatial house of K.S.Jayarama Aiyar, a leading lawyer who specialized in criminal cases. His son K.J.Mahadevan was a noted Tamil film director. He had acted in mythological roles and a few movies with social and patriotic content. His film Thyagabhoomi was much discussed in those days. His daughter Laksmi Mahadevan was a national tennis champion.

Opposite to the house of Jayarama Aiyar lived Shri T.V.Vishwanatha Iyer a noted lawyer who commanded extensive practice. His son T.V.Ramanathan is also a well known Advocate and he too had lucrative practice in the High Court. Shri T.V. Ramanathan was one year senior to me in the P.S.High School. He is an extremely popular person in our circles and is a very helpful person.

Next to K.S.Jayarama Iyer's house was the residence and clinic of Dr.V.Raghavan, a general medical practitioner who boasted of an extensive practice. His son V.R.Vasudevan was a top officer of the Indian Railways and he was the honorary secretary of the P.S.High School (North Branch). Dr. V.Ramamurthy a medical practitioner lived at the junction of Chitrakulam West Street and South Mada Street. He was an amateur Tamil dramatist and headed a play troupe named Viveka Fine Arts and staged a number of famous plays. Y.Gee Mahendra and Cho Ramaswamy had served their apprenticeship in this troupe.

The place where Chandra Travels now functions on East Mada

Street, housed a famous Orthopaedic nursing home owned and run by Dr. G.Krishnamurthy (fondly called GK by the locals) who had a number of foreign degrees in Orthopaedic surgery including an FRCS. He was the son of G.Gopalaswami, a leading lawyer who practiced criminal law and who lived in Pelathope Street. Dr.GK was a great fan of the detective Sherlock Holmes created by Arthur Conan Doyle and had read the books through and through. With the help of like-minded friends including my younger brother V.Madhava Rao, he staged radio plays over All India Radio based on Sherlock Holmes stories.

On South Mada Street, next to Dr.V. Ramamurthy's house was the complex of houses belonging to the Vembakkam family. The family's patriarchs were the two brothers V.Rajagopalcharulu and Sadagopacharulu. Before the setting up of the Madras High Court, the highest court in the early British period for the Madras Presidency (consisting of entire Tamil Nadu and parts of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Kerala) was known as the "Supreme Court of Madras". The Vembakkam siblings practised in this Supreme Court of Madras. Their sons V.C.Desikachariar and V.C. Seshachariar were also great lawyers of their era and carried on the traditions of the family. They owned the Law Weekly journal which is even now housed in the Vembakkam house called Vasantha Vilas. During those days when motor cars had not come to the City in significant numbers, the members of this legal family would travel to High Court and back and round the Mada streets in their own horse drawn carriages. They had stables for their horses on the South Mada Street at the place where Surya Sweets and Shakthi Stores are situated nowadays.

On the South Mada Street, lived two famous advocates who

were Telugu speaking and Pappu Somasundaram was one of them. They migrated to Andhra Pradesh High Court later on. Two other famous Telugu families were the Pilla Papaiah family who were manufacturers of Indian Medicines. Their most famous product was Bala Sanjeevini, a liver tonic for children. The Patrudu house still stands on South Mada Street adjacent to Karpagam Hotel. The other famous Telugu family was the Jammi family. They were known for their medicine for small children called "Jammi's Liver Cure". They lived in Sundareswarar Street off East Mada Street. The Jammi family gave up their house on Sundareswarar Street recently to the Udupi Puthige Madhwa Mutt which has come up there in an imposing way which also houses a Raghavendra Swamy Temple.

Just near the junction of South Mada Street and TSV Koil Street is the clinic of two doctors. One is Dr. Nageswaran and the other is his son Dr. Prahlad. The former is a general physician and the latter is a specialist pediatrician. People of Mylapore like to be treated by them and come in large numbers. A casual conversation with residents near the clinic will confirm this. The father of Dr. Nageswaran was Dr. K.S. Sambasivan, general physician. Dr. Sambasivan passed away in 1949 at the young age of about 46. It was an untimely death. The people of Mylapore genuinely mourned his loss and missed him very much. Dr. Nageswaran was in school at the time of this father's demise.

On South Mada Street, lived Adanki Varadappa Chetti. He was appointed in the pre - independence days as Honorary Presidency Magistrate. It was a lofty position in public life. The people of Mylapore would go to him for the solution of any civic problem(s) faced by them and he was not found wanting in seeing to it that authorities properly ameliorate the grievances of the people.

Annaji Rao, Ganapathi (near the Kapali ther or rath), Vallabeshwara Rao, J.R. Gundappa Rao, P.J. Kuppanna Rao were all well-known lawyers in the Mada Veedhi area.

Shri E.Vinayaka Rao (1891-1951) was as mentioned above a resident of the Mada Streets area for more than three decades. Mathematician Srinivasa Ramanujan was his class mate in Town High School, Kumbakonam. They corresponded with each other for a number of years till Ramanujan's demise. Some of the original letters of Ramanujan written by him while in the Cambridge University have been donated by us to the Ramanujan Memorial in Royapuram. Vinayaka Rao was one of the Founding fathers of the Mahratta Education Fund, Alwarpet This institution celebrated its Centenary in the year 2012.He was a well known public figure of those days and was a National Committee Member of the National Liberal Federation a political party which existed before 1947. He was an office bearer of Servants of India Society which was founded by Gopal Krishna Gokhale. He was an Office bearer of the South Indian National Association and Ranade Library which are even now a live organization. He was also one of the editors of the All India Reporter, Nagpur. He authored an important book on Transfer of Property Act, Extracts from THE HINDU giving gist of some tributes paid to Vinayaka Rao in condolence meetings held in January 1952 are set out in an annexure to this booklet.

MYLAPORE – The Abode of Learning

A write up about North Mada Street will not be complete without a mention being made of the Karpagavalli Bala and Balika Patasala (called by the Mylapore people as the Dadi school –Dadi in Tamil means beard). It was an elementary school located in a medium sized

house at the junction of North Mada Street and Chengalaneer Pilliar Koil Street. It later shifted to an area next to the Mylapore Shirdi Sai Baba temple. It was founded by an aged service-minded educationist by name Dharmaraja Iyer who sported a flowing big beard. The quality of education imparted in this school was known to be praise worthy and we are aware of the alumni attaining high positions in life.

The Vanniar Kalyana Mandapam on South Mada Street has been around for more than 70 years. There was no other Kalyana Mandapam in this part of Mylapore and mostly parents of brides/bridegrooms used to go all the way to George Town where there were a number of Komatti Chettiar choultries. Of course, there were one or two Kalyana Kudams near Parthasarathi temple in Triplicane also.

Slowly, the profile of the residents of the Mada Streets began to change. New colonies which were quieter, cleaner and as yet not too far from Mylapore sprang up - CIT colony, Mandavelipakkam, Trustpakkam, Gandhi Nagar, Indira Nagar , to name a few. This was compounded by the formation of Andhra Pradesh. The Telugu speaking Advocates shifted to Andhra Pradesh. Most of the other residents moved to the new nearby colonies. In their place came persons who were new settlers in Mylapore. The resultant position now is that the number of old time residents like us can be counted on the finger-tips.

MYLAPORE – The Abode of Quaint customs and traditions

The street scenes in the three early decades were unique and different. Before the break of dawn, Gudu Gudu Pandis (belonging to the Marathi tribe called Pingla) would appear, sounding their small udukkus (damarus) doing soothsaying for the gullible. There were occasionally street jugglers-cum-magicians. They used to call

themselves Modi Mastans and all of them would claim that their guru was one Pitambara Aiyar of Kumbakonam. They used to make their boy assistants lay eggs by hypnotizing the boy, cover his body and raise the body by 3 or 4 feet all the time playing on the snake charmer's peculiar shaped pipe. They were experts at this type of sleight-of-hand tricks. They would say believers will see Dharma Raja and skeptics will see Yama Raja and ,for fun, threaten youngsters that they would get loose motions in the night if they disbelieve the Magic powers. Modi Mastans and Pinglas are extinct now, but I occasionally see the brightly attired and painted Bhoom Bhoom Madus. Residents would get rice in Arisi Mootais and not loose packets. Rice in small fistfuls would be given in exchange for coriander and curry leaves (Kotthamalli & Karuveppilai) and green chillies as a kind of barter system. Religious mendicants would be given alms in the form of fistfuls of rice.

Commercial Establishments in the Area

In those distant days, only the following few shops existed. This was in addition to a few silk saree shops like Sivaram & Co, RASI, Kathayee and Sampurna Sastri. There were no jewellery shops.

East Mada Street

- Kannan News Mart where Rose Milk is famous. Milk was not available easily before 1952 and the Rose Milk was first introduced in large scale only from 1952. The shop was well known for a special betel nut ready for Beeda etc.
- T.N.Kalathi Mudaliar & Co., a kind of departmental store selling very many articles.
- South Indian Stores (Groceries) – Owned by Palghat Sadashiva Iyer.

South Mada Street

- G.Venkateswara Rao - Grocery store
- Ambika Bros., - School Books and Stationery.
- Ganapathy & Co. - Ghee & Butter
- Lalitha Lunch Home - where Sangeetha hotel is now situated
- Logu Tea Kadai (Logu was a member of Periyar's party.)
- Vijaya Stores - Book Sellers

R.K. Mutt Road

- Alliance publishers.
- There was a Coffee Powder shop, whose name I am unable to recollect.

North Mada Street

- Srivati Stores - Piece goods i.e. shirting cloth etc
- Swami Brothers - Dhoties, shirtings etc.

Mathala Narayanan Street

Mathala Narayanan Street (also called Mithai Kadai Sandu) is an ancient narrow street of hoary traditions. There were two famous Sweet and Pakora shops in this narrow one-way street which continue to be still popular and sell snacks of good quality. Mithai Kadai Sandhu certainly did not get its name from the present bhajji stalls nearby where the cooking is done almost on the middle of the road.

There were two shops selling musical instruments; one of them is still there. The other musical instruments shop was owned by a person known as Selvam. We bought a Veena from him for my sister

in the year 1948. The Veena is still with us. The Veena teacher was Smt. Dharmambal who also taught music to the pupils of Lady Sivaswami Aiyar Girls Higher Secondary School. Even now, on this street, one can find another shop dealing with sale and repairs of Mridangam owned by Mr. C.Varadan who is 67 years old. There is photographic evidence in his shop to prove that top Mridangam artists have dealings in Mridangam sales/service with the shop which has been in existence for decades. Colloquially, the instrument Mridangam used to be called Mathalam by the common folk of Mylapore in the olden days. The name of the street seems to have evolved from this fact. Some of the musical instruments business has gone to bigger business houses near Luz Corner (on Royapettah High Road) like Saptaswara Musicals, Shrutilaya etc.

There were no buildings alongside the boundary wall of the temple tank. There was a row of coconuts trees instead. There was only one Bus route No. 3 from Mylapore starting from the Tank(R.K.Mutt Road) upto High Court run by a private company called Public Passenger Service. The buses were green coloured. There was also a bus route No 6 from Ice House to T.Nagar via Luz Corner run by City Motor Service with blue colour buses.

Three or four Vegetable shops were found near Kapali temple and at Valleeswarar Koil. These were regular shops in Sheds with roof, floor and door. I still remember Munuswamy and his wife Kantham who sold vegetables at Valleeswarar Koil and the adjoining Muslim plantain leaf seller. In those days, there was a big granite stone Mantapam at the entrance Gopuram of Valleeswarar Koil. Munuswami and the Muslim plaintain leaf seller had their shops in this Mantapam on payment of rent to the temple. Kantham's brother Radha took over from her and later became a co-owner of the entire

Thannithorai market. He also owned a Radha Bakery, Radha Pharmacy and some other Radha shops which he set up for his sons in the vicinity of Luz Corner on Royapettah High Road.

There was scarcity of milk felt in those days. This lasted till the advent of AAVIN. There was a cooperative milk society in Ayanavaram and milk would come in cans brought on bicycles all the way. For procuring cow's milk for growing children, we depended on local milkmen who brought their cows to the door step and milked in our presence. Our milkman was a Christian person by name Sandana Swamy. His daughter Arokia Mary even now remembers us all. She stays in her old age in Kutcheri Lane off North Mada Street.

A mention has necessarily to be made of the Pantulu family living on East Mada Street. They were living there even before my father came to North Mada Street and even now stay in the same house (Old door No.24). Nagabushanam who is now the head of the family was my school mate in P.S.High School. His brothers T.Kesava Rao and T.Appa Rao were well known figures in Mylapore. Their cousin late Krishnamurthi Pantulu was a highly service minded man and they were pillars of the All India Sai Samaj Mylapore, for a number of years. Their sister was T.Kalpakam an honoured and dedicated Teacher of the Lady Sivaswami Aiyar Girls School

A mention has also to be made of SOLAR HOUSE near Mylapore Permanent Fund on South Mada Street. In the earlier years, the owner of this house was Subramania Iyer. He was a Chess enthusiast and we have witnessed National champion Mr. Manuel Aaron, State Champions etc. engaged in playing chess in Solar House. The family still lives there. Recently, in August 2014, the son of the house, R.Ganesan who was aged 84 passed away. The vegetable vendors who sit at the entrance of the house were kind

enough to make a gap of 3 or 4 feet to enable the body and bier to be taken out.

There were practically no cricket test matches during the period 1936 to 1947 on account of World War II situation. Interest in the game was at low ebb. Moreover, the cost of equipment needed for cricket like bat, stumps, gloves, pads, balls etc was not within affordable range for most of the lads of Mylapore in the early decades. Of course, there were always a fortunate few boys of affluent families who were privileged to organise teams and play league matches. One could see boys playing, marbles, gilli-danda, kite flying, kabbadi, spinning top and the like. Later, in the 1940s and onwards equipment for sports like cricket, football, volleyball, bakset ball started being given in the evenings at the P.S.High School. The huge grounds of the school were full of boys at play.

The huge P.S. High school grounds have now shrunk with the building of various Annexes, Matric School, P.S. Senior Secondary School etc. There used to be a huge ancient tamarind tree on the ground. Youngsters would dread to be near the tree after sunset. There were various stories of ghosts sitting on the branches of the tree and howling in the night winds. Ghosts were classified as ordinary Pishashu, Kolvai Pishashu, Anal Kakkaum Paay, Muneeswaran, mischievous Kutti Chattan etc. After hearing nightmarish stories of the ghosts narrated in a dramatic manner, we boys would not get sleep in the night.

Interest in Test Matches revived when the mighty West Indies Team visited India in 1948 under the captaincy of Stollmeyer. The celebrated Weekes, Walcott and Prior Jones were in this team. Commentary was relayed over All India Radio. We were thrilled by the commentary of Vizzy, Chakrapani, De Mellow and others.

However, radios were owned by a privileged few only who would hesitate to switch on their prized possession. Surmounting all these obstacles and getting to hear the commentary was a rare treat for us. That was the life in those days.

Then and Now

As already mentioned in my Introductory Note, in describing the state of the Mylapore area from time to time, I wish to confine myself to the three decades of 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. I am not enthused when I visualize the post 1960 period. The streets cannot hold the traffic generated nowadays and it is chaos everywhere. Encroachments and parked cars badly clog the streets. Lord Kapaleeswara while setting out on his Chariot during the annual festival must be using supernatural powers to get going. There are now a number of tea shops and in the morning, packs of street dogs can be seen waiting eagerly before them to get their daily quota of porai biscuits. Recently, some elderly morning walkers after finishing their stroll were sitting on a bench in a park in Trustpakkam. There came in two young men and a pack of street dogs came running on seeing them, jumping over well kept hedges and trampling the grass etc. The young men drew out biscuit packets to feed the dogs, right in the park. They followed by feeding crows with Karaboondi and Ompadi. The senior citizens remonstrated but to no avail. Such is the position of orderliness and otherwise in present day Mylapore.

CHAPTER II

Well Known Thanjavur Marathi speaking families in the Mada Streets

When reminiscing about who all were residents of the Mylapore area, I found that there were also about half a dozen Thanjavur Marathi speaking families. I thought that it would be a good idea to put this information in a separate chapter so that the readers can get knowledge about such people having lived in these Mada Streets peacefully and in great dignity. To my knowledge, my family and another family (Late Lakshman Rao's family on the North Mada Street) are the only two families left in this area. I now proceed to write about the Marathi families of yesteryears in the succeeding paragraphs.

Dewan Bahadur Raghunatha Rao

Opposite to the bus stand at Mylapore temple tank on Ramakrishna Mutt Road stands a huge multi-storied edifice named VISHWA KAMAL, This building has banks, offices and 58 large sized apartments. Originally, on this site, there stood a very big mansion. This was the bungalow of Dewan Bahadur Raghunatha Rao who lived during the period 1831-1912. A few lines about his life which have been lifted from the silver jubilee souvenir of the Mahratta Education Fund, Alwarpet that was published in the year 1937 are reproduced below and will be of interest to the readers -

> "Raghunatha Rao was the cousin of Sir T.Madhava Rao who was an illustrious Dewan of the princely kingdom of Travancore. He entered the then provincial Government of Madras Presidency in 1856 first as Translator in the Collector's

Office and later got promotion as Sheristadar and still later as Deputy Collector. After serving on the Tungabhadra Project and at Trichinopoly and Coimbatore Districts, he came to Madras as Town Police Magistrate and Justice of the Peace.

He also served as Dewan of Tukoji Rao, the Holkar of Indore. He retired from government service in 1888 and thereafter spent the rest of his life in educating public opinion on social, political and economic problems"

In 1888, a small conclave of 17 eminent persons including Raghunatha Rao, T.Madhava Rao, Justice Sankaran Nair, P.Rungaiah Naidu and Dr. Subramania Iyer was held in the bungalow of Raghunatha Rao in which a blue print for establishment of the provincial arm of a Nationalist Movement was discussed. This later proved to be the precursor to the establishment of the mighty Indian National Congress.

Dr. R. Nagaraja Rao

Some feet away from Vishwa Kamal Building while proceeding towards Luz corner and opposite to Pelathope Street was situated the eye clinic of the famous ophthalmologist D.R.Nagaraja.Rao. His clinic functioned during evening hours and he had a good practice. His main clinic was near the Parthasarathi temple in Triplicane and he attended to patients and performed eye surgeries in the mornings in the main clinic. At the site where the Mylapore clinic was in existence there now stands the Thirumailai MRTS station.

It may have been late 1953 or early 1954. My grandmother's sister Sarada Mavsi came to us from Thanjavur for our general assistance in having a cataract operation done in the second eye. The operation done in Thanjavur Eye hospital on the first eye was

botched up. She was an aged issueless widow. We took her to Dr. Nagaraja Row and he successfully operated on her. He sternly told us not to talk of any fees in the circumstances of this case.

Madhav Baugh

Madhav Baugh was the residence of Sir T.Madhava Rao who was in the distant past the Dewan of Mysore It was a huge compound at the Luz corner and well-known commercial ventures like Nehru News Mart, India Stores, Sangeetha Residency Hotel are situated on the fringes of this compound. The Building inside which was of gigantic proportions, now stands demolished and is waiting for construction activity.

Madhava Rao's grandsons and heirs were the brothers R.Venkat Rao, R.Madhava Rao, R.Krishna Rao and R.Vasudeva Rao. In the division of property, Venkat Rao became the owner of Madhav Baugh. He used to allow the use of his building for marriages etc in the families of his close friends, free of charge. The wedding of the daughter of E.Vinayaka Rao (a mention about Vinayaka Rao has already been made in a previous chapter) was celebrated in Madhav Baugh. To the best of our knowledge the only surviving person in Venkat Rao's lineage is a lady by name Sukanya who was living in Bangalore. This lady was married in the Purnayya family. Purnayya was also a Diwan of Mysore in the good old days.

Venkata Rao's brother, R.Madhava Rao used to live in the Race Course area and presumably he was given the family property in that area. Madhava Rao's son, Commander M.Anand Rao was in the Royal Navy during the World War II period. He took part in the fierce naval battles between Britain and Germany in the English Channel and North Sea. The sinking of the famous German battleship Graf

Spee took place during one of these naval batttles.

R.Vasudeva Rao was allocated the family property situated on Kutchery Road. The name of the Bungalow is Vishram Baugh. The Mylapore Head Post Office used to function from here before it got the present building adjacent to the Jain Temple on Kutchery Road. Coming again to the Mada Streets, there was a piece of big sized property known as Jumna House on North Mada Street at the site where NAC Jewellers(Silver shop) and Vijaya Pooja Samagri Store now exist. This house had a back entrance on Palathope Street. This house was occupied by the fourth brother R.Krishna Rao. His wife Ramaa Bai was a well-known socialite of those days.

Dr. M.C.Nanjunda Rao

Dr. Nanjunda Rao, M.B.,C.M. was a Marathi Kshatriya medical practitioner of great repute. He commanded lots of private practice. He acquired two residential houses in Mylapore. The first one was Sai Sadan on R.K.Mutt Road (presently, Khazana Jewellery is located at this place). He seems to have been an ardent Shirdi Sathya Baba devotee. When the All India Sai Samaj headed by H.H.Narasimha Swamiji first came to Mylapore, it functioned from this house. This house had a back entrance from the Nanjunda Rao colony near the Sai Baba Temple. One of the scions of Dr. Nanjunda Rao whose name is also Dr. Nanjunda Rao stays in Nanjunda Rao Colony.

Another house of Dr. Nanjunda Rao can be found on the Kutchery Rao at the corner of Mathala Narayanan Street. Dr.Mahender, ENT Specialist has his clinic in this place. Dr. Mahender is also a Marathi speaking person.

R. Balaji Rao

We next move to the Balaji Rao complex on North Mada Street. Shri R.Balaji Rao was born in Kumbakonam in the year 1842. Finding little scope for acquiring higher education in Kumbakonam , he set out for higher studies to Madras. This may remind us of Dick Whittington of English lore who having heard while in the country side about prospects in London (somebody told him metaphorically that the London roads were paved with gold) set out on foot travelling miles and ending up as a prosperous London banker and Mayor of London. Like Dick Whittington, Balaji Rao also had no money for transport. He walked part way and the rest he travelled in a bullock cart in which he got a lift. He took his law degree in 1870 and set up practice in the Madras High Court. He rose to be the earliest leading figure of the bar. He was a corporation counsellor for Mylapore for several years. His greatest contribution to Mylapore was the founding of the Mylapore Hindu Permanent Fund. Balaji Rao built a very spacious house on North Mada Street. Andhra Bank, Ambica Departmental Stores, etc are located in this building at present. He passed away in 1896. I learnt about what is mentioned in this paragraph about Balaji Rao from his descendents B.Ranganatha Rao, B.Nagaraja Rao and N.Sanjeevi Rao who held high positions in the Indian Railways, IIT of Madras and State Bank of India, respectively. These three gentlemen are now staying in Balaji Nagar,Royapettah. Balaji Nagar is named after Balaji Rao.

R. Sarawathi Bai

Long back, there existed a part-terraced and part-tiled small house on North Mada Street. It has now been replaced by a two-storied building. You can find the name board "Bhuvaneshwari

Jewellers" fixed on the new building. A middle class Marathi speaking Madhwa family owned the old place and lived there. Saraswathi Bai was a daughter in the family. She was widowed at a young age, got teachers' training and worked as a respected Teacher in Lady Sivaswami Aiyer's Girl School. She was a competent teacher and was popular among girl pupils of the School. Some such old pupils who are reading this piece may remember her and honour this teacher's memory in their own hearts. The only surviving son of the family by name Sridhar owns a clothing shop named SONARTEX situated on R.K.Mutt Road opposite to Ramakrishna Mutt's dispensary.He is ably assisted by his wife Smt. Lakshmi.

Dairy Development Adviser Gopal Rao

Opposite to the house of R.Balaji Rao of North Mada Street, there is wooden doorway. If the doorway is opened, there is in front of you a clean passageway. At the end of the passageway is a house which is clean and well kept. Till 1949, Shri Gopal Rao who hailed from Madurai lived in this house. He was the first son-in-law of R.Balaji Rao,Advocate (This Balaji Rao is the grandson of the famous Balaji Rao who lived during the period 1842-1896 about whom mention has already been made). Shri Gopal Rao was selected for the important position of Dairy Development Adviser to the Government of India and moved to Delhi to take up this position 1949. While in New Delhi, he took active interest in activities of local South Indian Maharashtrian Association.

Shri G.K. Damodara Rao

Shri.G.K.Damodara Rao, was another famous personality of Mylapore of those days. He started practicing as an Advocate from 1927 in the Kapali Sannadhi Street. He was later appointed as Distr

ict and Sessions Judge and moved to the districts of Tamil Nadu. He was a Marathi Kshatriya.

Prof.T.N.Bhima Rao & Shri.T.B.Nagarajan

Near the Karpagavalli Bala and Balika Pathasala (Dadi School) at the junction of North Mada Street and Chengalaneer Pilliar Koil Street, lived Professor T.N.Bhima Rao a distinguished professor of Mathematics in the Government Arts College/Presidency College. He was elevated as Principal of the Colleges. He was a Thanjavur Marathi speaking person. His only son T.B.Nagarajan shone in academics and was successful in the very first IAS examination held after 1947. He rose up to be the Additional Comptroller and Auditor General of India.

Tailoring Businesses on the Mada Streets

Some of the Marathi speaking people were good at tailoring. There were two tailoring shops one on North Mada Street and another on Sannadhi Street near Kapaleeswarar temple. One was owned by one Shri Babu Rao and the other by Shri Chinnaji Rao. As years rolled on, these shops closed. There is even now a tailoring shop owned by G.V.Rao at the Luz Corner.

CHAPTER III

Kapaleeswarar temple and religious activities

The temple is the hub of the Mada streets area of Mylapore. As for the details of the temple, the pujas & the festivals celebrated there, lots of articles and books have been written. It is not proposed to weary the readers by repeating them. We may confine ourselves to lesser known information in this regard. Years back, the big Mandapam just outside the sanctum sanctorum of Kapaleeswar and Karpagambal (just outside which the sacred Nandi is installed), did not have so much of artificial electric lighting. From the hooks on which vegetables, fruits, sweetmeats and snacks are hung for the Naramani festival, were hung colourful globular Rasa Gundus made of mercury smeared mirror -type of glass which would reflect light. The Gundus were multi-coloured. Also hung by polished chainware were glass lamp holders. The lamp holders held wick lamps. When the lamps were lit in the evenings, the light of the lamps would get reflected by the Gundus and the whole area would look heavenly and ethereal.

Readers should not assume, on the basis of what is written in the preceding paragraph that I am a votary of the "old is gold theory". In the present day conditions, the illuminations have necessarily to be done using modern equipments and methods of lighting. In certain other matters, we may have to continue with olden ways . For example, in the matter of pulling the "ther" or chariot on the Rathotsavam day, there is a thrill and devotional feeling which the devotees get by holding the "Vadam" or rope. The whole beauty of it will be spoilt by using mechanised prime movers or tractors for this purpose.

The Archakas of the temple are called Gurukkals and the senior

most Gurukkals who were well-versed in Shaivite scriptures and Sanskrit were called Shivacharyas. In recent times, (Late) Dr Vishwanatha Shivacharya was one of the well-known Shivacharyas. He worked as Professor of Sanskrit in Vivekananda College and did the pujas and the Deeparadhanais at the temple before and after college hours. His father was the celebrated Swaminatha Gurukkal. He was the Chief Priest in the 1940s and 1950s. To some extent, he ploughed back the Dakshinai received by him to get small ornaments for the temple as his offering to the God. When the flag mast (Dhwajasthambam) was gold plated during his tenure, he bore part of the cost. There were two other chief priests who were contemporaries of Swaminatha Gurukkal. They were Natesa Gurukkal and Doraiswamy Gurukkal. Natesa Gurukkal's son, Senapathi Gurukkal was very popular and has now superannuated. Senapathi was fond of scouting movement and he was member of the Pratap troupe (the main Mylapore scout troupes were 'Shivaji', 'Pratap' and 'Subhrahmanya'). Senapathi's son Kapali is now a Gurukkal. Kumara Gurukkal, Chief Priest was the son of Doraiswamy Gurukkal and Kumara Gurukkal's son Balaji is the present Shivacharya. Mylai Sundara Pillai was a noted nadaswaram vidwan of yesteryears. Kapali devasthanam had the good fortune of having his services. Listeners were mesmerised by his Nattai ragam at the start of the temple processions.

While on the topic of temple music, a small aside about the celebrated composer and singer Papanasam Sivaṉ. Though he did not live on the Mada Veedhis, but we have seen him so many times rendering namasankirtans and bhajans round the four Mada streets. He seems to have lived in Papanasam Sivan Salai (formerly Palace Road) connecting Santhome High Road and Mylapore Bazaar Road. He is an integral part of the lore of the Mylapore area. He has

composed innumerable songs in praise of Lord Kapaliswara and Goddess Karpagambal. It is said that he was emotionally moved on getting the Gopura Darshan of the God seated on the Adhikara Nandi on the third day morning of the Panguni Thiruvizha and spontaneously created and sang the famous Kriti - "Kaana Kan Kodi Vendum,Kapaliyin Bhavaniyai..."

Have the readers heard of Adir Vettu ? This is the firing of loud explosive gunpowder by a device which grinds the gunpowder and brings about the explosion by friction. In olden days, during the annual Brahma Utsavam (Panguni Thiruvizha), firing of the adir vettu was a must. In the evenings, big torches in the form of rings (called deevatties) would be carried. One of the many items of fireworks on North Mada Street in front of Teej house belonging to my friend and classmate J.D.Pannalal, a Marwari gentleman was "China Potti". This was a big drum shaped combustible box. Inside were kept puppet-like images of Ganesha, Murugan, God and Goddess folded and in compartments. The box would have elaborately and artistically packed fireworks and fuses that would emit colours. When the "China Potti" was lit, the lights would appear and one by one the the figures of the gods would appear dangling from the box. We youngsters used to enjoy the spectacle.

How many of you have entered the Bommai Chatram on South Mada Street during the annual Thiruvizha and seen the exhibits kept there? It is an interesting exhibition that is kept there. This has continued over the decades not just years. The building and exhibits belong to a Trust long ago created by a wealthy Shaivite devotee during the days of the Dubashes of the East India Company. Dubash is derived from the term Dvi-bashi i.e. one knowing English and Tamil, they were interpreters for the Englishmen. Eight big halls of the Chatram had framed hand-painted pictures from various religious

texts during the ten days of the festival. The rewards of Swarga i.e. heaven for doing good deeds during the life time are depicted. Also shown are horrible punishments inflicted in hell for doing bad deeds or sins. One is reminded of the term Purgatory in Christian doctrine.

For all outings of the main deity of the temple, before the gods start for the round of the four Mada streets, a purification of the streets is done. Nowadays, what is known as Thirushulam is taken round in a palanquin for the purification. In the olden days the Thirushulam idol was not taken out (perhaps the authorities did not want to take chances with the safety of idols) and instead a contraption consisting of a branch of coconut tree was lighted and dragged round the streets. Invariably, the lighted branch was dragged by a Brahmin youngster and his nickname was Madu (Bull). This man was a dim-witted person who would run errands for others when asked. He was liked by the locals and fed, clothed and cared for by them. He did the washing of the buses on R.K.Mutt Road. The bus drivers and conductors were always grateful to him.

There were a number of scholars well versed in Shaivite Tamil devotional literature living in this area. Some of them had regular office jobs and got immersed in religious duties during non-office time. There was Janakiraman who lived on East Mada Street. In the compound of the house where he lived, was a fairly big Vinayaka temple (next to Kalathi Rose Milk shop). This was a family temple. The family has shifted elsewhere but the Nithya Pujas are going on. Then there was Balsubramania Mudaliar of Pitchupillai Street. He worked in the Mylapore Permanent Fund in the initial years and later as Office Superintendent in the P.S.High School. He practised Shaivism and was a pious man. He observed the ordained ways of doing Subhramanya Puja on Kirthigais. The Puja during Skanda Shasti was a very special one. His son Kulandaivelu was my class

mate in school and was employed in Carborundum Universal Co. in a managerial capacity. After retirement, he continues to stay in Pitchupillai Street in his renovated house.

A strange and welcome fact. There are no TASMAC wine shops on the four Mada streets. There are also no mutton, chicken or fish stalls.

Another important feature is that apart from the ancient Vinayaka temple of Janakiraman mentioned above, there are no temples at all on the four Mada streets proper except for Kapali temple and Valleeswarar Koil. All that can be said is that "this is as it should be".

We have seen Muharram procession of Tazias vending their way through the Mathala Narayanan Street and North Mada Street. The Kapali temple tank area belonged to the Nawab of Arcot. He leased it to the temple so that the tank could be used by the temple for Neeradal of the gods on special occasions and also for the annual Theppam (boat festival). He however, put a condition that the Muslim ceremony at the culmination of the Tazia procession on Muharrum day should be allowed on the banks of the temple tank and this was readily agreed by all concerned.

CONCLUSION

Having reached the stage that our family has uninterruptedly lived on East Mada Street for over 85 years, I decided that I should prepare a brief record about our neighbourhood, some aspects about my family, myself and our fellow residents of the Mada Veedhis as far as I could recollect. I have confined myself to depicting the conditions that existed only during the period 1930-1960. That exercise has been completed in the form of this booklet. I sincerely hope that the readers will find this an interesting and enjoyable reading.

ANNEXURE

Gist of Tributes to E.Vinayaka Rao at a public meeting THE HINDU dated 4th January 1952

Mr Alladi Krishnaswamy Aiyer stated that for over thirty years he and Vinayaka Rao were friends. Vinayaka Rao had a very distinguished career in the University and was for some time a Lecturer in the Pachaiyappa's College. As he thought the profession of law offered a more lucrative field, he studied for law and joined the Bar. After serving his apprenticeship under Mr. N.Chandrasekhara Aiyar, Mr. Vinayaka Rao worked with Sir C.P.Ramawamy Aiyar; when the latter was Advocate General. Subsequently, he had a lucrative practice. Mr Rao's clients trusted him and he had a scrupulous sense of dignity, honour and rectitude and commanded the respect of the Judges. More than anything else, he was a man of sterling character, abiding friendship, stern loyalty and unfaltering devotion to public causes. Mr Alladi Krishnaswamy Aiyar also said that Vinayaka Rao had taken an active part in the work of the Indian National Association and Ranade Library. He also said that Vinayaka Rao belonged to that type of men who believed that a lawyer was not only one who owed his duty to the profession, but one who devoted himself to the larger interest of the public. He also said that Vinayaka Rao's lectures and discourses on many topics were informing and informative. He was also an unbending patriot.

Mr K.Balasubramania Aiyar said that Mr Vinayaka Rao was one who believed in liberal principles without any reservation. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru had spoken highly of the work of Vinayaka Rao as a lawyer. He was also a good student of public affairs. Mr. Vinayaka Rao was the founder of the Maharatta Education Fund, He was for a

long time the Editor of the Magazine Bharat Dharma and also was correspondent of a School in Triplicane.

Mr.K Bhashyam recalled the days when Vinayaka Rao had given his assistance, sympathy and help to the Satyagraha movement along with Mr.T.R.Venkatarama Sastri. Vinayaka Rao had also rendered help to the programme of constructive work and had encouraged Khadi production. He was a person of sterling character and his knowledge was encyclopaedic in range.

Mr T.R.Venkatarama Sastri stated he attached great importance to Vinayaka Rao's pronouncements on any question. He stated that Sir P.S.Sivaswamy Aiyar and Rt.Hon. V.S.Srinivasa Sastri had great admiration for Vinayaka Rao.

THE HINDU dated 7th January 1952

Mr. S.Panchapakesa Sastri, retired Judge of the Madras High Court said that Mr Vinayaka Rao was a good friend and a zealous public worker who performed his various duties with a steady purpose and unflinching determination. As a lawyer he was respected both by the Bar and the Bench. Mr T.R.Venkatarama Sastri stated that Vinayaka Rao exemplified in himself the many good qualities of the Maharashtra community. He was a steady and strenuous worker who carried out his work conscientiously. Mr K.Chandrasekharan stated that from his close association with Mr Vinayaka Rao, he could say that Vinayaka Rao was a model public worker. Mr S.R.Venkatraman referred to the fact that Vinayaka Rao was an Associate of the Servants of India Society, Madras.